

COLUMBIA COUNTY POLICY FOR VOLUNTEERS

I. Purpose

The purpose of this Policy is to provide guidelines that support participation and community involvement of members of the public through volunteer opportunities within Columbia County.

II. Definitions

A volunteer is defined as:

Any person authorized by the County to donate approved services to the County without pay or reimbursement other than approved incidental expenses for those services rendered. Volunteers consist of people who are not employed by the County and are:

- Eighteen (18) years of age or older.
- Children age twelve (12) – seventeen (17) years of age with written parental consent.
- Children age seven (7) – eleven (11) years, accompanied by a parent or legal guardian participating in family or group volunteer activities.

The following persons are not considered volunteers:

- Inmate workers;
- Community restitution clients;
- County employees who have not signed up as a volunteer through an established volunteer program;
- County employees who are coordinating and/or supervising a volunteer program during work hours as part of their job duties;
- Persons who provide services at the County through their association with another agency, such as RSVP, MTC trainees, Columbia County Education Campus workers, job shadow programs or school intern programs.

During an emergency when the County Emergency Operations Center is activated, emergency volunteers will be considered County volunteers only if they are assisting at a County supervised work site and have signed in on a Volunteer Sign In Sheet. Those people who are volunteering through their association with another agency or entity (e.g., volunteer firefighters or the Columbia County Amateur Radio Association) will not be considered County volunteers.

Volunteer appointments to Boards, Commissions and Committees are not considered volunteers under this Policy. For further information on these appointments, contact the Board of County Commissioners' Office.

County employees may perform volunteer service for the County during their non-work hours provided:

- The volunteer work is with an established volunteer program.

- No work time will be used to perform the volunteer duties.
- The employee signs a waiver indicating that the decision to volunteer is entirely his/her own and no payment for the work will be made.
- The volunteer services are unrelated to the employee's regular job duties.

III. Objective

The objective of this Policy is to provide a uniform volunteer management system throughout the County which maximizes our volunteer resources.

IV. Scope

This Policy applies to all volunteers in all County departments, except the Columbia County Sheriff's Office Reserve and Posse volunteers and Adopt a Road volunteers who are covered by separately approved programs/policies.

V. Policy

The County is best served by the active participation of members of the public who, through volunteer service, allow continuation and expansion of services and support for paid County staff.

VI. Procedures, Equipment and Training

Creating Volunteer Positions:

All County volunteer programs must receive prior approval from the Board of County Commissioners. Departments should submit an outline of the proposed program, including the proposed services to be completed, the number of volunteers anticipated, the employee designated as the Volunteer Supervisor and the anticipated length of the program. If the program changes substantially at any time or the number of volunteers substantially increases, the program should be once again reviewed and approved by the Board.

Once a department has decided to involve volunteers there are some steps to consider. For a volunteer program to be successful, some thought must be put into the process.

It is important to understand the difference between volunteer and paid positions:

- Make sure your volunteer jobs are created to supplement and support staff.
- A prospective employee may not "volunteer" in a position they have applied for while they are waiting to hear the outcome of their application or to start employment.
- Most volunteer positions should be developed as part-time positions that can be done on a flexible schedule or that are for a specific event of a limited duration.

Some additional tips for planning volunteer jobs:

- Involve paid staff in the planning and developing of volunteer positions. Allow ample time to hear ideas, needs and concerns from all staff who will interact with the volunteers, even on a limited basis.

- Reach outside the conventional idea of what volunteers do and be creative as jobs are developed for volunteers.
- Ask and answer the following questions:
 - Who will supervise and train the volunteer?
 - What are the requirements for the time involved and the work schedule for the job? Are they fixed or flexible? Is the job on-going or will it end with a project? How will the supervisor evaluate the job and the volunteer? Will the volunteer feel appreciated for the job he or she is doing?

Recruitment and Selection:

Volunteers become involved in County programs in many different ways. Some may hear or read about a one-time event such as a clean-up effort and decide to arrive and volunteer for that event only. Others may inquire about an ongoing opportunity within a County department such as assisting victims.

In either situation, it is important to remember that the volunteer supervisor has the duty of recruiting and screening volunteers. Recruitments may be done through flyers and information sent to newspapers, local television or radio, the County's website or through other means. Potential volunteers may contact departments for opportunities to work for the County. For a one day event, the screening may consist of an overview of the duties, completion of the appropriate forms, and a self-selection on the part of the volunteer.

For an ongoing position, volunteers should complete the Volunteer Application (attached to this Policy). Then, prior to appointing a volunteer, interview the potential volunteer and explore their skills, knowledge, and interest in the position. The screening process may also include a reference check when appropriate. Contact the Human Resources Director for assistance in developing interview and reference questions.

Volunteer Orientation:

All volunteers, except those volunteering for a single day event, such as 'clean up days', must sign the Volunteer Agreement, attached to this Policy.

The following is a list of topics that may be included in a volunteer orientation. The volunteer supervisor will need to modify the items covered as appropriate for the particular volunteer position. For a one time volunteer event, for instance, you may simply give the group the specific information they need related to that event.

Potential topics are:

- Mission and Goals of the County/Department
- Welcome
- Customer Service
- Safety
- Accident insurance (if driving their personal vehicle for County business)
- Workers compensation or liability coverage

- Use of computer, fax, e-mail and internet
- Screening
- Confidentiality
- Discrimination/harassment Policy and Procedure
- Drug and Alcohol Policy and Procedure
- General Information about County departments
- Volunteer rights and responsibilities
- Appropriate waivers (see attached)

Documentation of Volunteer Hours

Departments **must** keep a record of volunteer hours for the individual volunteers including dates and times worked.

Departments must submit to Payroll on a monthly basis a cumulative record of volunteer hours worked for workers' compensation billing purposes. A volunteer time sheet is attached to this Policy.

Because many volunteers include their volunteer service on job and other types of applications, they count on their volunteer supervisor to keep accurate work records. Individual records are kept in the volunteer's file.

Dismissing a Volunteer

Volunteers, like paid staff, may be dismissed or released from volunteer service. It is important to document any problems the department may be having with a volunteer in the volunteer's file. Prior to dismissing a volunteer, determine if the goals and objectives of the job assignment were made clear. If there are concerns with performance it is important to document the issues and to provide feedback to the volunteer.

Guidelines for Dismissing a Volunteer:

- Inform related staff of your intentions
- Choose a quiet private setting
- State the purpose of the meeting
- Identify the volunteer's expected behavior
- Describe your observations; cite specific instances of problem behavior
- Allow the volunteer to speak and inform you of the reasons for their actions
- Compliment the volunteer on individual skills or positive aspects of performance
- Release the volunteer from duty without reprimand or apology
- Document in writing the conversation, the information reviewed, and the final decision
- Dismiss the volunteer only as a last resort

Safety in the Workplace

Departments are responsible for providing volunteers with safety and personal injury guidelines for specific jobs and work locations. When personal protection equipment is required for the position, the volunteer must either provide his or her own or be properly equipped by the department and trained

in the use of the equipment prior to engaging in any such work. Volunteers may only perform functions requiring a license or certification if they have the current license or certification that is required for that particular function.

Liability and Insurance Coverage

Volunteers must realize they are volunteering at their own risk. It is the responsibility of the Volunteer Supervisor to educate the volunteer as to the volunteer's rights, roles and responsibilities.

However, workers' compensation coverage is provided for volunteers who are injured while performing authorized services for the County. The County's general liability insurance coverage extends to volunteers and agents of the County.

Accident/Incident Reporting

Any damage to personal or County vehicles, property or any personal injury that occurs during a volunteer's official volunteer duties for the County must be reported immediately to the supervisor.

All volunteer injuries requiring medical attention must be reported within 24 hours to the Human Resources Department and the workers' compensation 801 form submitted. If the accident/injury does not require medical attention the supervisor will need to complete a supervisor's report and submit it to Human Resources.

If there is damage to personal or County vehicles or property, the supervisor must then submit a completed incident form to General Services by the end of the first business day after the accident.

Volunteer's Use of a County Vehicle

Volunteers may not normally drive County vehicles. However, this may be allowed only for those established programs, such as the Sheriff's Posse or Reserves, which have formal policies and procedures outlining volunteer duties which includes driving County vehicles.

Volunteers may use a private vehicle for their official volunteer work if proof of insurance is kept on file for the volunteer.

Volunteer's Use of County Equipment

Volunteers may use County equipment in the course of their duties provided they have had appropriate training and supervision. They must follow all safety procedures and age requirements designated by State law or County policy for the safe handling of any equipment used.

Confidentiality

Volunteers are expected to adhere to the same confidentiality guidelines as paid County staff. County staff is responsible for explaining confidentiality guidelines to the volunteers, including any local, state or federal mandates. When appropriate, volunteers may be required to sign a statement of confidentiality (example attached).

Standards of Conduct

Volunteers are expected to adhere to the County and departmental policies and procedures for volunteers while acting in their official duties as outlined by the department. Departments may expand or create additional policies and procedures that are specific to the department and its volunteer jobs and responsibilities.

VII. Responsibilities

Supervisors are responsible:

- To identify particular needs/projects for volunteers
- To recruit and select volunteers
- To inform volunteers of requirements of the position, obtain signatures on appropriate waivers prior to the volunteer beginning work, and to orient the volunteer to policies and the job
- To supervise the work performance of the volunteer
- To provide the volunteer with performance feedback and acknowledgment for their contributions to the County.

Volunteers are responsible:

- To inform the supervisor of hours and days of availability and to be available when a commitment has been made
- To ensure they understand the services to be provided and to inform the supervisors if they are, for any reason, unable to perform the needed services
- To ensure they understand and comply with the local, state and federal laws, rules and regulations which may apply to the area in which they provide services, including all the provisions of this Policy and the Volunteer Agreement for Services.

VIII. Attachments

Volunteer Application Form

Volunteer Authorization to Release Information

Volunteer Agreement for Services

Volunteer Registration and Waiver Form

Parent /Guardian Release and Waiver under 18 Form Statement of Confidentiality